



# Pass the Word

## Cervical Cancer is Preventable

Of all cancers that affect women, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable. Yet, an estimated 70 women in Maryland will die because of cervical cancer this year. With regular Pap test screenings and the HPV vaccine, we can save lives in Maryland. Join the effort:

**Pass the Word: Cervical Cancer is Preventable!**

### ***What is cervical cancer?***

The cervix is found at the lowest part of the uterus. Cancer of the cervix usually forms slowly, as abnormal cells begin to change into a pre-cancerous state. For some women, pre-cancerous changes go away without any treatment. For others, the condition will need to be treated to keep cancer from developing.

### ***What causes cervical cancer?***

99% of cervical cancer cases are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), a group of viruses that can cause changes in the cells of the cervix. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States.

### ***Who is at risk for cervical cancer?***

While young women are at risk of precancerous lesions, the risk of developing cervical cancer increases with age. So, it is important for women of every age to talk with her health care provider about having a Pap test.

### ***How is cervical cancer detected? The Pap Test***

Pre-cancerous and cancerous cervix cells are usually discovered by the Pap test. During this simple test, a small sample of cells is taken from the cervix and sent to a laboratory, where the sample is checked under a microscope for abnormal cells. The test should be done regularly for women who are (or have been) sexually active and for all women who are older than 21 years of age.

### ***How can I pay for a Pap test?***

Check with your health insurance plan about costs and co-payments. If you are a Maryland woman aged 40-64 and do not have health insurance that covers this important test, call 1-800-477-9774 to find out if you are eligible for a cervical cancer screening, at no cost to you.

### ***Can cervical cancer be prevented?***

When pre-cancerous cells are found, they are treatable and cervical cancer can be prevented. Remember, regular Pap tests can find cancer before it starts! Also available is the HPV vaccine. This vaccine helps to prevent the HPV infection that leads to cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is approved for use for females 9 to 26 years of age. Check with your doctor to see if the vaccine is right for you or a loved one.